

ARTHUR AND LEWIS TAPPAN.

BY

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ARTHUR AND LEWIS TAPPAN.

In the village of Northampton, Massachusetts, were born, ninety-seven and ninety-five years ago, Arthur and Lewis Tappan. They were two of eleven children. Of the seven sons, Benjamin was United States Senator from Ohio and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and John was one of the widely-known and respected merchant princes of Boston. It is the distinction of Arthur and Lewis Tappan that they were Abolitionists. The conscientious training which they as boys received from their devoted mother, a niece of Benjamin Franklin, prepared them for the hard struggles of manhood. Of their mercantile career in Boston, Montreal or Portland the biographer may properly speak; but their career as Abolitionists is intimately concerned with the establishment in 1815 in the city of New York of the house of Arthur Tappan & Co. For twelve years Arthur remained in business in this city, when he invited his brother Lewis, who was in Boston, to become associated with him. During these twelve years Arthur Tappan's prominence as a merchant became assured and his intense interest in the leading benevolent

institutions of the day brought him conspicuously before the public. The American Sunday School Union, the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, the Union Missionary Society, the New York Evangelical Missionary Society, the American Education Society, the New York Magdalen Society, the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, were objects which he helped generously to support, and with which his name as president or director became closely associated. On account of his gifts to Yale College and other institutions of learning at the early period of his life, he was called a Christian philanthropist; and the title was no misnomer. In 1827 he established *The Journal of Commerce* and determined to make it a paper that would exert a more decided moral influence and uphold a more sacred observance of the Sabbath than characterized the press of that day in this city.

THE COLONIZATION SOCIETY.

But with the very general moral awakening that spread over the country at this time the thoughts of men were drawn to the proposition of colonizing free persons of color upon the coast of Africa. The scheme of colonization had been mentioned as early as 1773. During the Revolution Thomas Jefferson favored the project; but it was not till 1816 that the American Colonization Society was organized in the city of Washington. Henry Clay, who presided, heartily favored this idea which, to use his expression, would "rid our country of a useless and pernicious, if not a dangerous portion of its population." Arthur Tappan became interested and contributed largely

to the funds of the Colonization Society. He thought it would be the means of Christianizing Africa and abolishing slavery in our own country. He even proposed to establish a line of packets between New York and Liberia. But he became convinced before long of the inefficiency of the society and withdrew from it. He thought the desire to get rid of the free colored people was favored that the slaves might be more securely held. He became convinced that colonization was the wrong solution to the slavery problem. In 1825 an effort was made to establish the Massachusetts Colonization Society, and John and Lewis Tappan, who then lived in Boston, were of the committee to report a constitution. Daniel Webster was chairman and Lewis Tappan secretary of the meeting. When the nature of the society was explained, Webster made the remark: "Gentlemen, I will have nothing more to do with the matter; for I am satisfied it is merely a plan of the slaveholders to get rid of the free negroes." The committee refused to report a constitution.

ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETIES.

Gradually those who had the cause of the negroes at heart withdrew from colonization societies. Not colonization but abolition now became the watchword of the friends of the colored race. Some of the founders of our nation entertained anti-slavery sentiments. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society, with Benjamin Franklin as President, was organized in 1775, and the New York Manumission Society, with John Jay as President, in 1785. These and similar organizations in other States exerted a considerable influence for the abolition of

slavery. In 1819 the Missouri conflict stirred up an agitation of the subject. Benjamin Lundy, the pioneer of abolition, exerted what influence he could in his lectures through the country ; but it was not till about 1830, when William Lloyd Garrison denounced colonization and declared himself in favor of immediate abolition, that the war of anti-slavery seemed to have begun in earnest,

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

Lundy had formed the acquaintance of Garrison in New England in 1828—the same year he had first met Arthur Tappan in New York—and had invited Garrison to Baltimore to help edit his journal, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. The attacks that Garrison now made on slavery in general, and his denunciation of the conduct of a ship master for carrying slaves to New Orleans, for which reason he was thrown into a Baltimore prison, were thrilling incidents in those dark days. While Garrison lay in prison, our own poet, Whittier, ever the friend of abolitionists and a champion of freedom, asked Henry Clay to set Garrison at liberty by paying his fine. But Henry Clay was anticipated by Arthur Tappan, who, though he was not then personally acquainted with Garrison, quietly paid the fine and costs. Years after that event Garrison wrote the following letter to Arthur Tappan :

BOSTON, November 12th, 1863.

Dear and Venerated Sir:—Thirty-three years seven months ago I was lying in the cell of the city prison in Baltimore, for the crime of exposing and denouncing certain townsmen of mine, whom I detected in carrying on the domestic slave trade between that city and New Orleans. Comparatively unknown at that time and utterly without means to pay the fine and costs of court that were imposed upon me by a slave-holding judge, I might have died within those prison walls if your sympathizing and philanthropic heart had not prompted you, unsolicited, to

send the needed sum for my redemption. It is not for me to trace the consequences of that deed to the cause of the oppressed since that period ; but I desire to assure you that my gratitude to you is as fresh and overflowing as it was when I was delivered from my incarceration, and will ever remain so.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

From the Baltimore prison Garrison came to New York, where he met Arthur Tappan. These two men now became warm friends ; and the alliance thus made had an immense influence in the cause of anti-slavery. Garrison proceeded to New England, and in January of 1831 issued the first copy of *The Liberator*, a journal that was generously supported by Arthur Tappan, who subscribed for a large number of copies. If these were sent to prominent men through the country, it was thought their help might be obtained in the cause of freedom. Within a year after Garrison's denunciation of slavery had begun the New England Anti-Slavery Society was formed. The sole surviving member of that brave body of men is Oliver Johnson, well known to you all.

THE NEW YORK CITY ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

The establishment of such a society, with the motto of immediate emancipation, gave great encouragement to the New York abolitionists. *The New York Evangelist*, conducted by Joshua Leavitt, agitated the subject, and thousands of anti-slavery tracts were sent monthly by Lewis and Arthur Tappan to clergymen of all denominations throughout the country. About the same time, with the help of Arthur Tappan, was established in this city *The Emancipator*, upon the platform of abolition and against colonization. The time had now arrived, it was thought, when an anti-slavery society should be formed

in this city. A call was issued for the friends of immediate emancipation to meet at Clinton Hall, on the 2d of October, 1833, and that call was signed by Joshua Leavitt, William Goodell, William Green, Jr., John Rankin and Lewis Tappan. But the excitement became so great that the trustees of Clinton Hall refused to allow the meeting to be held there. The mob they feared became a mob in reality. Lewis Tappan, a trustee of Chatham Street Chapel, suggested that room as the place of meeting. Oral notices were sent out, and about fifty persons responded. The mob gathered near Tammany Hall, eager to attack the chapel. Arthur and Lewis Tappan passed through the crowd unnoticed. The sexton of the chapel locked the iron gates, and gave the keys to Lewis Tappan, who at once entered the building and told the gentlemen present to transact their business with dispatch before the mob assaulted them. A constitution was quickly adopted, and Arthur Tappan was made President and Lewis Tappan one of the board of managers. The corresponding secretary was Elizur Wright, the only surviving member of that band of heroes, and he, I am glad to say, is present here to-day. Several thousand rioters gathered before the chapel. "Let us rout them!" "Ten thousand dollars for Arthur Tappan!" and other similar cries were made. Just after the meeting had broken up one of the mob followed Mr. Tappan and the others with a drawn dagger. The ruffians now rushed in, and seizing a negro whom they called "Brother Tappan," asked him to make a speech. "Gentlemen," said he, "I am not used to making speeches, and don't pretend to know how. But I do know one or two things. One is that God hath made of one blood all nations. Another is that 'all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and

the pursuit of happiness.'" Joshua Leavitt and Lewis Tappan spent the night in preparing an account of the meeting, which appeared in all the morning papers; and thus was organized the New York City Anti-Slavery Society, whose fiftieth anniversary we this day celebrate. The principles of the constitution of the society to-day seem self evident truths, but fifty years ago they created a tempest.

What the Tappans were in those exciting days is thus described by Hon. Henry Wilson, in his "Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America :

"Arthur Tappan early became a distinguished and successful merchant of New York. An earnest and Christian philanthropist, his name was associated with nearly every missionary and reformatory enterprise of his day. Modest, quiet and unassuming, without much facility in the use of tongue or pen, his life will be remembered rather as one of deeds than words. Surrounded by ledgers and invoices, clerks and customers, his ears and hands were alike open to the appeals for personal charity, the claims of an oppressed race, or of a ruined world. Munificent as unostentatious in his gifts, his range of benevolence was wide and catholic. His brother, Lewis Tappan, though unlike him in many particulars, was no less earnest and devoted to the cause of reform and Christian benevolence. Like his brother, with whom he was so long associated in trade and beneficence, he was a man of remarkable business capacity, great courage, and large hearted philanthropy. Unlike him, he spoke and wrote with fluency, pungency and vigor. Of the many enterprises with which he was connected, his rare versatility and energy made him the life and soul. He would oversee his immense mercantile business, go on 'change, write two editorials, attend a meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society's Executive Committee, step into the noon prayer meeting, and pray or deliver an exhortation, and wind up by sitting in the church session, and addressing a temperance meeting composed of negroes in the evening, all in the same day; all the time would be in a hurry, but never flurried, and would seem perfectly at home in each of these vocations. He infused much of his own energy and system into the new society, besides contributing largely to its funds."

THE AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

Two months after the formation of the New York City Anti-Slavery Society, the abolitionists were prepared to carry out the idea of William Lloyd Garrison in forming

a national society ; and so the delegates met at Philadelphia to organize the American Anti-Slavery Society. John Greenleaf Whittier and Lewis Tappan were chosen secretaries of the convention. The journalistic work of Benjamin Lundy and William Lloyd Garrison for the slaves was warmly indorsed by the Convention. "Although they are," spoke Lewis Tappan, "held accursed by those who knew them not and who seek to impeach their motives and destroy their lives, yet the coming generations shall hallow their memories and rise up and call them blessed." The declaration of principles enunciated by the Society formed, in the opinion of Von Holst, in his "Constitutional and Political History," "one of the most important boundary marks in the history of the United States." Slavery was a crime ; and complete extirpation of that crime was the only remedy. The national organization of the abolitionists introduced this new and vital principle into American history. Arthur Tappan was chosen President of the Society, William Lloyd Garrison, Secretary of Foreign Correspondence, Elizur Wright, Domestic Corresponding Secretary, and Lewis Tappan a member of the executive committee.

SCHOOLS FOR COLORED PEOPLE.

The enforced ignorance of the colored race was appalling ; but the anti-slavery agitation inspired an intellectual awakening. At a colored convention, held in Philadelphia two years before the formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society, it was proposed to establish a college for negroes. New Haven was suggested as the location for this new institution of learning, and Arthur

Tappan, who was deeply interested in the project, went so far as to purchase several acres of ground in New Haven and to arrange for the erection of buildings. But the city was in a ferment. "A negro college by the side of Yale College!" "The City of Elms disgraced forever!" "It must and shall not be!" Such was the language of the day; and so at a town meeting it was declared that "the establishment of a college to educate the colored people was incompatible with the prosperity if not the existence of the present institutions of learning, and destructive to the best interests of the city."

When Miss Prudence Crandall, in Canterbury, in the same State of Connecticut, proposed to admit colored girls into her school, a similar outcry was raised. Miss Crandall was thrown into prison, and was confined in a cell which had just been vacated by a criminal condemned to death. To the Rev. Samuel J. May, Miss Crandall's adviser and attorney, Arthur Tappan wrote to offer his support. "Spare no necessary expense," said he. "Employ the best legal counsel; and let this great question be fully tried, not doubting that under the good providence of a righteous God, the true and the right will ultimately prevail." But the persecution against Miss Crandall continued. Arthur Tappan left his pressing business in New York, and visited Miss Crandall in the Windham County jail. To the Rev. Mr. May he said: "The cause of the whole oppressed race of our country is to be much affected by the decision of this question. You are almost helpless without the press. You must issue a paper, publish it largely, send it to all persons whom you know in the county and State, and to all the principal newspapers throughout the country. Many will subscribe for it, and contribute largely for its support,

and I will pay whatever it may cost." And so *The Unionist* was established, of which the editors were the Burleigh brothers, who soon became well known abolitionists.

THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

In 1834 the American Bible Society had boasted of distributing a Bible to every family in the United States; but as slave families were not included, the American Anti-Slavery Society offered for this object five thousand dollars provided the Bible Society would contribute fifteen thousand. Lewis Tappan, the chairman of the committee to make this offer, was not even allowed a hearing by the Bible Society; and when, years after in London, at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention, he was asked to give the particulars of the Bible Society's action, he generously refused, because, said he, "I felt unwilling, before such an audience, to relate a circumstance so disgraceful to the managers of the Bible Society and to my native country."

LEWIS AND ARTHUR TAPPAN MOBBED.

On the Fourth of July of '34 it was proposed to hold a meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society at the Chatham Street Chapel in New York, but soon after the meeting had convened it was broken up by a violent mob. In Whittier's poem, written for that Fourth of July and for that occasion, how much pity for the slaves and rebuke to our institutions were contained in the lines:

"But oh! for those this day can bring,
As unto us, no joyful thrill,
For those who under freedom's wing
Are bound in slavery fetters still."

For several days the mob which had surprised the meeting raged through the city. Houses and stores were attacked and the wildest excitement prevailed. The daily press could not find words of opprobrium strong enough to fling at the Tappans. The rioters held meetings, and determined to mob the house of Lewis Tappan in Rose Street. They broke open the door, smashed the windows, threw the furniture into the street, and there burned it. It is related that a portrait of Mr. Tappan's father-in-law, painted by Gilbert Stuart, was about to be thrown into the fire when a ringleader declared it was a picture of Washington and ordered it to be restored. This portrait is now preserved by the family with the greatest reverence. That same week the store of Arthur Tappan & Co. was threatened. From an eye witness I have obtained the following facts: The mob gathered in the vicinity of the City Hall, and rushed down Nassau Street and Maiden Lane to Hanover Square, shouting: "Go for the Tappans!" "Burn their store!" They expected to steal all the goods they wished. They pelted the building with stones and broke all the glass. But the iron shutters well protected within the store the thirty clerks, which, by the way, was a larger number than was employed by any similar establishment in the city. Mr. Tappan was a man of peace; but that night he was Commander-in-Chief. He told the clerks not to fire (and they had loaded muskets), unless the rioters actually entered the store. As they were about to enter some one called out: "Look out! The clerks are about to fire!" The mob began to stampede and ran for their lives, expecting to be shot. Only forty-nine years ago in this very city, and yet one man's house and another man's store were mobbed

because they were opposed to slavery! For a long time before and after this event Arthur Tappan had a loaded musket standing by his desk. He was prepared for any emergency. Lewis Tappan's reckless courage was startling. The only weapon he carried during this excitement was the New Testament, a copy of which he had in his breast pocket. When in 1835 it was announced that he would suffer personal violence if he attended the Utica Anti-Slavery Convention, the threat served only to make him feel that it was his duty to be there.

OBERLIN COLLEGE.

Arthur Tappan believed in free speech. When the trustees of the Lane Theological Seminary, in which he was largely interested, forbade the students to discuss the anti-slavery question, he was much disturbed. The result was he induced Rev. Charles G. Finney to go to Oberlin College; and Mr. Tappan became a munificent patron of that institution. Here students were admitted irrespective of color, and entire freedom in the discussion of anti-slavery was allowed.

THREATS OF PERSONAL VIOLENCE.

The most dangerous year for the abolitionists was 1835. In that year one hundred thousand dollars was offered for the bodies of Arthur and Lewis Tappan, to be delivered in some slave State. When Arthur Tappan was told that fifty thousand dollars would be given for his head, he quietly remarked: "If that sum is placed in the New York Bank, I may possibly think of giving my-

self up." At the same time there came to New York harbor from Charleston, S. C., a tender, belonging to a United States revenue cutter, with eighteen men on board intent on capturing Arthur and Lewis Tappan, Elizur Wright, and William Goodell. Mr. Wright one day overheard in Gilpin's News Room the plans for the capture; yet he and Arthur Tappan walked leisurely home to Brooklyn that night. In Charleston, S. C., anti-slavery publications and effigies of Dr. Samuel H. Cox, William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan were burned. After their actual capture a "real tragedy" would occur, were the words of the Charleston *Courier*. An attempt was made to mob Arthur Tappan's house in Brooklyn. "Northern merchants with Southern principles" tried to injure his business. "Incendiary," "midnight murderer," "assassin," were a few of the words employed by the press to characterize Arthur Tappan. The insurance companies refused to insure his property. The banks would not even discount his paper. Threatening letters, pieces of rope as a reminder of the gallows, and even a slave's ear were sent him from the South. People from the country would come into his store and simply look at him, so curious were they to see a man of whom they had heard so much. He was urged by influential men to resign the presidency of the American Anti-Slavery Society. His reply was: "You demand that I shall cease my anti-slavery labors, give up my connection with the Anti-Slavery Society, or make some apology or recantation. *I will be hung first.*" The great fire of 1835 and the financial crash of 1837 were terrible experiences for him to pass through; but they only left him a more determined abolitionist.

THE MURDER OF LOVEJOY.

What a thrill of horror ran through the country in 1837 when the first drop of blood was shed in the cause of anti-slavery! I refer to the murder of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy, at Alton, Illinois. When the news reached New York a meeting of the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society was called, and in his summons to Elizur Wright, one of the committee, this was the brief postscript of the secretary, Lewis Tappan: "We have melancholy intelligence. Great mob at Alton; Brother Lovejoy killed. Also another, and seven more wounded. We think of a solemn service at the Tabernacle, Brother Green to preach a sermon. Come over." The meeting was held at the Broadway Tabernacle and commemorative services were ordered throughout the country. The resolutions regarding this murder, signed by Arthur Tappan, chairman, were eagerly read all over the land, and the anti-slavery agitation spread like wild-fire.

THE AMERICAN AND FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

In 1840 differences of opinion regarding the admission of women, and the formation of a distinct anti-slavery political party, and other causes led to a split in the American Anti-Slavery Society. At a meeting held at the house of Lewis Tappan it was unanimously agreed that a division was inevitable. The Tappans wished to discuss slavery and not the woman question. A new society was therefore formed, called the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, with Arthur Tappan as President and Lewis Tappan as Treasurer. Of the executive committee were John G. Whittier, Gerrit Smith,

Judge Jay, Joshua Leavitt and the Tappans. The members of this new society and those in sympathy with them initiated, the same year, what was called "The Liberty Party," afterward merged into the "Free Soil Party" of 1848, which was in turn absorbed by the Republican Party in 1856. Arthur Tappan, who had declined a re-election to the presidency of the old society, continued as president of the new society for thirteen years, or until May 11th, 1853, when the public anniversary was held at the Broadway Tabernacle.

The story of the kidnapped Africans of the vessel "Amistad," the great excitement occasioned thereby, the final restoration of the slaves to their native land, largely through the instrumentality of Lewis Tappan; the plan for the abolition of slavery in Texas, and Lewis Tappan's journey to England to persuade the English Government to co-operate in the scheme—these and many other points of history might be added to show what the Tappans did for the cause of anti-slavery.

But the question of abolition now became not only a great moral issue, but a political question as well. It could not be smothered by mob force. It was discussed in the halls of Congress. It agitated the whole country. Its principles triumphed in the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1861. The Emancipation Proclamation, the Civil War, the amendments to the Constitution, were the logical outgrowth of the seed that had been sown years before; and Arthur and Lewis Tappan lived to see the day when the slaves were made free. Arthur Tappan died in 1865 at the age of seventy-nine, and Lewis in 1873 aged eighty-five years.

The character of the Tappans is seen in their work. Lewis Tappan had remarkable executive ability and

great power to control men and stimulate them to work for the abolition of slavery. He was a man of indomitable energy and naturally a leader. He gave courage to all who loved the cause of immediate emancipation. Though a man of defiant independence, he worked largely under the influence of his brother. The counsels of Arthur Tappan were safer to follow. Arthur's moral nature, his sense of justice, his unselfishness, his modesty, were life long traits. In him were united firmness and tenderness. He said that to do right was the highest expediency. The industry and perseverance of the Tappans made abolitionists of young men. Neither ridicule, threats nor violence could swerve them from the purpose of their lives. They need no eulogy. They had a work to do and that work was triumphant.